

## **REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

### **I. Status of the Claims**

Claims 2 - 5, 13 - 19, 21 and 22 were previously canceled.

Claims 8 and 25 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein.

Claims 1, 9, 23, and 24 are amended without the introduction of new matter. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, with reference to Applicants' specification at page 14, lines 5 to 20, page 15, lines 17 to 24 and page 23, lines 11 to 25.

Claims 1, 6, 7, 9 - 12, 20, 23, 24 and 26 remain pending.

### **II. Objections to the Claims**

Claims 1, 23 and 24 are objected to with regard to informalities. Applicants amend claims 1, 23 and 24 to address these informalities, and respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

### **III. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112**

Claim 25 is objected to under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 as containing subject matter not sufficiently enabled in the specification. In the interests of prosecution efficiency, Applicants cancel claim 25 without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby making the rejection moot. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 be withdrawn.

**IV. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103**

Claims 1, 6 - 9, 12, 20 and 23 - 36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 3,665,923 to Champaigne, Jr. ("Champaigne"). Claims 10 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over U. Champaigne in view of by International Application Publication No. WO 99/26573, to Osborn, III ("Osborn"). Applicants amend claims 1, 9, 23, and 24 to further define the nature of their invention, and respectfully traverse these rejections.

In amended independent claim 1, Applicants claim:

**1. An interlabial pad comprising:**

a surface side sheet having a permeable property for liquid;

a plurality of sheet pieces forming a back face side sheet and including a sheet piece having one end that overlaps another sheet piece;

an absorbent body for absorbing liquid and enclosed between the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet;

a junction joining the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet at a peripheral edge of the absorbent body;

at least one seam part formed by overlapping the plurality of sheet pieces over one another, the seam part including:

a longitudinal seam part extending in a longitudinal direction of the interlabial pad, crossing over the back face side sheet from an edge to another edge of the back face side sheet, and

an adhesive agent applied between the sheet pieces at the longitudinal seam part along the longitudinal central line,

wherein the sheet piece, which overlaps the other sheet piece at the longitudinal seam part and which covers a side closer to a longitudinal central line of the interlabial pad, is positioned at the absorbent body side of the back face side sheet, and wherein the plurality of sheet pieces are each formed of either a water disintegrable material

or a biodegradable material and overlap with each other over a range of 5 to 15 mm to form the longitudinal seam part; and

a mini-sheet piece formed of either a water disintegrable material or a biodegradable material, the mini-sheet piece adhering to the back face side sheet at the junction of the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet and covering a portion of the back face side sheet to form a pocket between the mini-sheet piece and the back face side sheet, wherein a finger of a user may be inserted into the pocket for either applying the interlabial pad to be worn by the user or removing the interlabial pad from the user to be discarded.

(Emphasis added)

Champaigne discloses a flushable sanitary napkin with adhesive attachment means (see, e.g., abstract of Champaigne). With reference to FIG. 1 of Champaigne, the Examiner suggests that Champaigne discloses each of the elements of Applicants' claimed invention with the exception of the "claimed dimensions of the seam part," which the Examiner suggests do not patentably distinguish the claimed invention over this prior art.

Applicants amend independent claim 1 to further specify that the a) the claimed surface side sheet and back face side sheet are joined in a junction at a peripheral edge of the claimed absorbent body, and b) that the interlabial pad further includes a mini-sheet piece adhering to the back face side sheet at the junction of the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet and covering a portion of the back face side sheet to form a pocket between the mini-sheet piece and the back face side sheet. Applicants respectfully submit that Champaigne fails to disclose or otherwise suggest these elements of amended independent claim 1.

For example, the Examiner compares the wrapper/film 14/20 of Champaigne to Applicants' claimed surface side sheet and back face side sheet. However, as illustrated for example in FIG. 2 of

Champaigne, the wrapper/film 14/20 of Champaigne is joined at a single seam along a longitudinal axis of the absorbent core 12 of Champaigne. Thus, unlike Applicants' claimed invention, the wrapper/film 14/20 of Champaigne is not joined in a junction at a peripheral edge of the absorbent body 12.

In addition, Champaigne fails to disclose or suggest Applicants' claimed mini-sheet piece adhering to the back face side sheet at the junction of the surface side sheet and the back face side sheet and covering a portion of the back face side sheet to form a pocket between the mini-sheet piece and the back face side sheet for inserting and removing the interlabial pad by a user. While Champaigne does disclose a protective strip 19 that is adhered to the wrapper/film 14/20 along its longitudinal seam, the protective strip 19 of Champaigne is neither adhered to a junction of a surface side sheet and back face side sheet at a peripheral edge of the absorbent body, nor formed to provide a pocket for inserting and removing the napkin by a user.

Osborn discloses an individual packaged for assisting in the hygienic insertion of an interlabial pad (see, e.g., abstract of Osborn). Applicants respectfully submit that Osborn also fails to disclose or suggest the above-described elements of Applicants' amended independent claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the above-described elements of Applicants' amended independent claim 1 are neither disclosed nor suggested by the sanitary napkin of Champaigne, with or without the addition of Osborn, and that amended independent claim 1 therefore stands in condition for allowance. As claims 6, 7, 9 - 12, 20, 23 and 26 each depend from allowable independent claim 1, Applicants further submit that dependent claims 6, 7, 9 - 12, 20, 23 and 26 are also allowable for at least this reason.

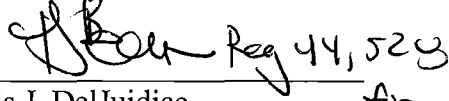
**CONCLUSION**

In view of the above amendments, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below once he has reviewed the proposed amendment if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

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Respectfully submitted,

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